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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #12 (SO12)
(Conflict Reduced in Mindanao and Other Areas Vulnerable to Violence)

E-nabling Mindanao teachers

TEACHERS BEING TAUGHT. Teachers from various schools in Sarangani and General Santos City perform an exercise during a recent training program conducted by the USAID-funded Computer Literacy and Internet Connection (CLIC) Program and the Systems Technology Institute (STI). The CLIC-STI partnership has trained at least 481 teachers from Mindanao schools in computer operations and Internet usage.

GENERAL SANTOS CITY, Mindanao – You don't see Cornelio Rollo burying his face in books or writing out his daily lesson plan anymore. If he's not explaining Physics principles or discussing World History in front of his high school class, he is searching for reference materials over the Internet or discussing new teaching methods with fellow teachers both here and abroad.

He is far- removed from his "computer phobic" self of a few months ago. "Before, I was afraid I might destroy a computer when I touched one. I didn't know anything about computers then. But with this training, I realized I could learn so many things. I am very happy with the Systems Technology Institute (STI) and Computer Literacy and Internet Connection (CLIC) Program for training us," enthuses Cornelio.

This New Society National High School teacher is just one of the 481 teachers in Western, Central and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) who have benefited from the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) training conducted by both CLIC and STI.

To date, the United Stated Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded CLIC Program has arranged MOS training for 481 teachers, working in 260 "CLIC- connected" schools. Eventually, teaching personnel from all CLIC schools will receive this training.

In addition to increasing the information and communications technology (ICT) knowledge of teachers in CLIC partner schools, the training focuses on developing new skills in the integration of computer and Internet usage into classroom teaching.

"Utilizing computers and the Internet as instructional resources helps teachers and schools to compensate, in part, for the scarcity of instructional resources now available to Mindanao teachers, especially in the ARMM," explains Happy Raagas, the CLIC program manager.

Based on published report by the Department of Education (DepED), the functional literacy rate of ARMM students is 60 percent, which is the lowest in the country. Likewise, ARMM scored the lowest among all the regions on a national achievement test covering English, Math and Science for sixth-grade and fourth-year high school students.

"My students will no longer thirst for new knowledge because they can now access the borderless library through the Internet," says a beaming Nabelah Sambolawan, one of the CLIC-MOS trainees in Lanao del Norte and a teacher at MSU- Tugaya. She too had no prior knowledge in computer operations and had not touched a computer before the CLIC Program installed them at her school. But with the 6-day training, she realized that the frontiers of learning opened by the Internet are boundless.

To spark and maintain the interest of his students, Cornelio now often teaches using Microsoft Powerpoint presentations with photos and references culled from the Internet. He says it is "too boring for the students to look at illustrations of ancient civilization printed in black and white in their outmoded textbooks".

Most of the teacher-trainees were astounded by their discoveries during the training, according to Dido Farrofo, STI IT coordinator and trainer at the General Santos workshop.

At training sessions, participants are taught basic computer usage and Internet operations. Teachers who have no knowledge of any of the software applications are grouped together, while others are similarly clustered. The trainers then distribute learning modules for the different groups. Most of the instructional modules are completed during the "hands-on" part of the workshop.

"This training is very beneficial to us, especially to schools that lack the resources. We hope CLIC and STI continue to strengthen their partnership so that they can provide assistance to more teachers and students in Mindanao," Sambolawan said.

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